The Changing Pier
Compiled by Stephen McNeil
February 12, 1997

Album 13
x.87

Introduction

This project is about the changes that have occurred during the past number of years in Ward Five area of Sydney. This is the business district of Whitney Pier.

I have used past editions of the Pier Times (1986). 1948 Sydney and District City Directory, and have interviewed a life long resident of Whitney Pier and South Bar area, Mrs. Mary MacKay Campbell Debison as well as my grandmother Mary MacNeil, and my father.

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ENTRANCE TO THE PIER

These pictures show the overpass which connects the Pier with the rest of Sydney. It was opened on November 23,1964. Sandra Best was crowned "Queen of the Overpass".

Before the overpass there was "The Subway". It was a railway underpass. It was built in the early part of 1912. Before the Subway was built there was a lot of accidents at the railway crossing on Victoria Rd. It was called MacQuarries' Crossing.

MENELIK HALL

The first street off the overpass is Laurier Street. On this street is located the Menelik Hall. The Pier is made up of many different cultures. The Ethiopian Cultural Society was formed in 1937. The building which houses this organization was named after the Ethiopian hero, Menelik, who defeated the Italian army in 1896.

WEST INDIA CRICKET CLUB

This building is located directly under the overpass on Tupper Street. This is the first street in the Pier. This is another culture represented in the Pier. Cricket was a popular game in the early days of the century. Pier teams often played against crews from the British boats that would come into the harbour.

559 VICTORIA ROAD

This is the Fitzgerald residence located at the base of the overpass on the left side of Victoria Rd. when coming into the Pier. This home was owned by Frank Fitzgerald. His brother,William, was a mayor of Sydney in the 1920's.

WHITNEY PIER ATHLETIC CLUB

This is located at 570 Victoria Rd. In 1948 this block between Hankard and Laurier Street was occupied by: # 562, Rahal and Sons Grocery and Modern Taxi Service, #570, Tomie Taxi, Lunch Counter, # 572, David's Pier Stationer and David's Grocery, # 584, Pier Government Store. There were several families as well. Some of their last names were LeBrun, Bennett, Keough.

Service Centre
METRO
METRO

IRVING

METRO SERVICE STATION

In 1948 this was a vacant lot.

IRVING SERVICE STATION

This is located at 610 Victoria Rd. In 1948 this was the location of the MacSween Service Station.

Mexitos
or
Doodles
Riverdale
Pop
$1.99

STOP

611 VICTORIA ROAD

In 1948 this plot of land was occupied by three buildings. They were:
Matty's Market, the home of Albert J. Dalton, and Villanova School. This location is presently vacant.

BLOCK OF CHANGE

In 1948 this block was filled with many different buildings as compared to today. From the service station going up Victoria Rd to Muggah Street the following businesses were located: The New World Cafe, Bennie's Dairy and Grocery, Thomas George Shoe Repair, Sherman's Popular Price Store, Gillis Taxi, Mary's Home Cooking, Seymour's Hardware, Presutti's Barber Shop, and Peter's Book Shop. In the picture the blue building was or occupies the site of Peter's Book Shop.

Smart Cars
CONVENIENCE STORE

SOMETHINGS DON'T CHANGE

In this block from the former Villanova School to Muggah Street there are presently many houses. In 1948 it was the same. Nothing has changed except for the people who live there. At the end of the block was Shaheen's Barber Shop which is now occupied by a Pizza shop.

THE SMARTCART TAKES OVER

The only building in this block is Kendon's Smart Cart. It was different in 1948 when seven buildings took up the land. These were:
Windsor Dairy, homes of Theresa Dawson and Arthur Murphy, The Second Hand Store, Cosmopolitan Grocery Store, and the Victoria Stove Store.

TORN Down Today.
May 03/2004.

NO LONGER BOOMING

This block was once occupied by some businesses and homes. In 1948 they were:
the home of L.E. Brewster, Pier Grocery Store, the home of John Thurbite, Eddie's Barber Shop, the home of Joseph Eddie, and Steve Dilney's Shoe Repair.

MT. PLEASANT TO HENRY

This block was once a busy place. From Needs going toward Mt. Pleasant the following businesses were located in 1948.
MacLeod's Beauty Parlor and Perlin's Grocery as well as Karrel's Ladies and Men's Clothing and a shoe repair shop. All this is located where Needs is today. In the rest of the block there was Joan's Dress Shop, Sam 's Men's Wear, And Campbell Brother's Grocery. Needs was the location of Dodick's Ladies wear in the late 1960's.

HISTORICAL
MUSEUM

ARCHIE
NATHANSON
STORE

ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE OF THE PAST

This block was once made up of many types of businesses. At the corner was an apartment building which housed Joseph's Hot Dog Stand and the Green Jade Restaurant. It was known as the Khattar Block. Next to this was the Casino and Star Theatres. The person I interviewed for this project worked at the Star Theatre. Next to this was Joe's Pool Room and a plumbing and heating contractor.

The Star was the largest theatre of the two but the Casino was the oldest. Mickey O'Leary was a projectionist at the Casino which was owned by Mr. Khattar. The first talking picture in Cape Breton was held at the Casino the week of June 17, 1929. Kids preferred the Casino because it was easier to sneak into than the Star. So many people would be going to the shows at one time that tickets had to be bought in advance. As more and more people got televisions fewer and fewer people went to theatres. Mrs. Debison managed the Star for a short period of time in 1939 and 1940. She met people from all over the world because ships from everywhere docked at the Pier.The two theatres later became bingo halls.

FROM HENRY TO BAY STREET (part 1)

At the corner of Henry and Victoria Road is the Victoria Grill. This used to be the Thistle Tavern in recent years. In 1948 it was the location of Manson's Drug Store. Next to this was Gallay Dry Goods Store. 730 Victoria Road is the location of Archie Nathanson's. This has not changed in name. In 1948 this was the location of Nathanson's Grocery.

NATHAN

THE FINANCE CENTRE

This picture shows the old Royal Bank Building which closed in 1995. This block was the site of the first Royal Bank. Next to the bank is the present Liquor store. This was once the site of Quirk's Garage. This was known as the Contor Block. The lot on the corner was occupied by an apartment building which housed Wong's Landry.

FROM HENRY TO BAY STREET (part 2)

The building to the right is the Pier storefront police station. It used to be Mendleson's Dairy. Next door is the Salvation Army Thrift Store. This used to be the Victoria Furniture Store.

YARNS & CRAFTS

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MARIA'S

YARNS & CRAFTS

BAY TO WEBSTER

At the corner of Bay and Victoria Road is Maria's Hair Salon. This was once MacAskill's Meat Market. In the other end of the building there was a tailor. Next door was once located the Jehovah Witness building.

ALWAYS BROWN

Across the street is Moraff's. It has always been a brown building. The Jehovah Witness used to have meetings upstairs. In the front part of Moraff's to the left Mrs. Moraff actually made and sold hats. In 1948 this was Moraff's stationary store. Next door was Isabel's Beauty Shop and a confectionary store. The Video store is located on the site of Condon's Hardware. Next to this was located David's Market.

CLOSED
FEDER'S

RESIDENTIAL

In 1948 the homes located here starting at the yellow one were owned by Alex C. MacNeil, Thomas Stone, Charles Rose, and Hymie Moraff.

A BARBER SHOP THEN AND NOW

At the corner of Webster and Victoria Road there is a barber shop. In 1948 this was MacIsaac's Barber Shop. At one time Mrs. Brodie ran a men's and women's store at this corner. Next door was the home of Richard Brennan and Alex Aucoin. Next to this was the Paramount Dry Goods Store. The old Feder's Jewellery store was once the home of Leith Dry Goods Store.

ANDERSON NATHANSON

ROGERS
CLOSED

LAW OFFICE

The site of the Anderson and Nathanson Law Office was once owned by the Chisholm family. Next door was William Gaum who operated a butcher shop on the site.

ROGERS

At one time this was a men's and ladies wear store run by Mr. and Mrs. Gavsie. This was also the location of the Selrite Variety Store in the 1950's and 60's. Next door was D.T. Cameron and Sons Dry Cleaning and Chisholm's Radio Service.

PS
PS PHARMASAVE
SEARS

GOING DOWN THE STREET

This section of Victoria Road was once occupied by such names as Joseph Liktor (811), Harold MacDonald (811r), William Morrison, David Goodwin, George MacDonald, Edward Quinn, and Dr. A. Calder (817), Fred Lacawiez and John Corbett (823).

PHARMASAVE

This present location opened in 1987. In 1948 this site was occupied by Mrazals's Radio Service, Modern Cleaners Ltd., and the home of Jessie Bonavisky and Frances Mizzi.
The first Pier Drug Store was begun in 1920 by G.W. MacMillan, a native of Pictou and was across the street from the present location. George Slaven took over the store and moved it to the former Bonavisky Building. Eddie Bruno and Gordon Ferguson purchased the store in time and operated it for twenty-four years. Mr. Bruno's sister was Mrs. Madore who originally owned the St. Phillip's Parish House. The Pier Drug Store last changed hands in 1980 when it was purchased by Paramount Pharmacies Ltd. and managed by the late D.A. Ferguson. The present manager is Anita MacKenzie who took over from John McNeil in 1991.

TAURUS

829 TO 859 VICTORIA ROAD

This area was once occupied by families and businesses. 833 Victoria Rd was once Breau's Electric Shop Other names included Hussey, Gallivan, Gillis, Riley, Saleny, Mendelson, Feders, Leith, Mayer, and Rowe.

GAUM CLINIC

The Gaum Clinic or Pier Medical Clinic as it is now known is a well known spot in the Pier. This was the original home of the Gaum family. There were five girls and four boys, two of whom practiced medicine in the Pier. They were the late Dr. Abe Gaum and Dr. Dave Gaum. Also located in this building was the Gaum Dry Goods Store. Next door was the original Pier Drug Store known as Slaven's Pier Drug Store in 1948.

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WHITNEY
TONING SALON

829 TO 859 VICTORIA ROAD (con't)

This is the view directly across from the building described below.

FORMER GROCERY STORE

This building on the corner of Swan Street and Victoria road was a former grocery store. In 1948 it was the home of Green's Confectionery. People who lived in the building were Ignatius Brown, Bert Corbert, and Archie Falconer. Next door was Feders Jewellery and Music Store. Next to this was Sherman's Grocery. At 840 Victoria Rd was located Bonavisky Taxi with Gaum's Store and Central Dairy next door. There was also a billiard parlor on the block.

ROYAL
CANADIAN LEGION
BRANCH 128

ACROSS FROM THE LEGION

This was once a general store run by Mayer's.

WHITNEY PIER LEGION

On this site there once stood a Methodist Church. The pastor's name was Mr. LeDrew. It was opened in 1901 and was known as Victoria Methodist Church. After Church Union in 1925 it became Victoria United Church. In 1937 the congregation went in with that of St. James Church which became Trinity United Church.

WESLEY
KENNY'S
Pizza
STOP
Eat-in
Take-out
PEPSI

ACROSS FROM OLD FIRE STATION

On this corner stood the Marshall Market. Next door was an apartment building which housed families with the names of: Wainwright, Dinn, Pittman, Anthony, and Bourgeois. In later years this was the location of Rudderham'sPlumbing and Heating.

Pier Fire Station

In 1914 the Pier Fire Station was built at the corner of Wesley Street and Victoria Road. Now Kenny's Pizza stands in its spot. In 1928 they got a motorized ladder truck. This meant the two fire horses, Pete and Joe, were no longer needed. It also had a jail with seven cells in the basement. The first caretaker was William Devereaux.

NEWMANS

COMMUNITY HOUSE

This is the site of the new Tim Horton's being built at the corner of Bryan and Victoria Road. At one time it was the location of the Community House. In 1923 the Community House was built by the Board of Home Missions. There were lots of activities going on here such as gymnastics, mother's clubs, and sewing classes. After the Second World War Trinity Church purchased the building as it needed more room for Sunday School classrooms. In 1973 the building was sold and torn down.

NEWMAN'S HARDWARE

Next to the old firestation was Newman's Grocery which is still a grocery store today under another name. Next to this was Newman's Warehouse and at the corner was Newman's Hardware. This closed several years ago. This was first a three story building on Robert Street. It was a boarding house for steel company employees. It was moved and was known as Nathan Cohen's Grocery. Several fires have left the building like this.

CREDIT UNION
WHITNEY

FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

Next to the Community House was a lunch room. Next to this was Jim Goth's Tailor Shop. Further down the street toward the former Ward Six was a shoe repair shop and the Cosmopolitan Store.

CREDIT UNION

This block houses the new Pier Credit Union. Next door was the old Salvation Army Citadel and next to this was Gaum's Dairy. In 1948 Cusack's Electrical Shop was located at the corner. The Salvation Army was built in 1905 and remained in use until 1970. The officer's quarters were up above the church.

POLISH VILLAGE

This is a popular hall in Whitney Pier. In 1948 the land is listed as being residential.

NEVILLE PARK

This area used to be a dump. In those days there were no garbage bags and everything was thrown out in potato or flour sacs. Today this is a ball field and playground as well as a track. It is named after a former Mayor of Sydney, Carl Neville, who was from the Pier.

PRINTING

FROM SPORTS TO PRINTING

This is the present site of LeBlanc Printing. In 1948 this was the site of Pier Sport Shop. The building was originally owned by the Murphy family. This block also contained the Sydney Co-op Society and Victoria Radio Service.

WHITNEY SCHOOL

This is the field on which was built Whitney School. This served as an elementary and junior high school. Across the street is the present Pier Fire Station and the Salvation Army Citadel.

IMPERIAL HALL

The Imperial Hall was the parish hall for Holy Redeemer Parish. It was located across the street from Holy Redeemer on Victoria Road. It served as a school, church, meeting area, parish hall, and as the sight of many Bingo games. The building was torn down in 1996 and the sight is now vacant.

HOLY REDEEMER CHURCH

Holy Redeemer Church was built in 1901 on Carlin's Hill. It had a seating capacity of eight hundred and fifty people. A school was started in the basement of the church between 1902 and 1906. On June 11, 1913 a fire broke out in the church at 12:40 P.M. Because there was so little water pressure to fight the fire the building was lost. Thirty other homes were also destroyed.

ST. ALBANS ANGLICAN CHURCH

In May, 1902 a congregational meeting was held to form St. Alban'sChurch. The first rector, Rev. Quinton Warner, was appointed. Trinity Sunday, 1912 was the date of the first service held in the main part of the Church.

St. Cyprian's Mission was opened on Henry Street in 1925 by the colored population of St. Alban's. In 1930 or so the church was damaged by fire and could no longer be used as a church. St. Alban's purchased it and used it as their first church hall.

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH

This Church was originally St. James Church built in 1900. Betwwn 1901 and 1909 the Church was completed, renovated, destroyed by fire, and rebuilt. It became Trinity United Church in 1937.

ST. PHILIP'S AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

St. Philip's is located on Hankard Street. The building used to be the property of the Dominion Iron and Steel Company and was located inside gate number four. It was moved to Lingan Road on a flat car and then to its present location on rollers. It was opened on July 12, 1928. St. Philip's is the only African Orthodox Church in Canada. In 1986 it had a congregation of two hundred and fifty families.

ST. PHILIP'S PARISH HOUSE

The present pastor is Rev. Vincent Waterman who is the son-in-law of Rev. George Francis who served the parish from 1940 until 1982. The strong West Indian culture of the community is encouraged by the church's sponsorship of many social and heritage events.

This house was originally owned by the Madore family. The person I interviewed often sat on their front steps. One member of the family, Dr. Patrick Madore, just received the Hingston Memorial Award for outstanding achievement and unique contribution to the Department of Surgery at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal.

DAY CARE

UNITED MISSION

This began in 1912 when the Methodist Missionary Society established an Italian Mission. The Women's Mission Society used to do a lot of knitting and baking for the ethnic community surrounding the mission on Laurier Street. One person said there were fifteen different languages spoken within a hundred yards of the mssion.

ST. MARK'S PRESBYTERIAN

This was started at the corner of Fisher and Henry Street. The contractor was the grandfather of the person I interviewed, Captain Hughie Campbell. This church only lasted approximately two years and never had a resident minister.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

This home on Bay Street served as the office for a Whitney Pier physician, the late Dr. C.A. D'Intino. Originally this home was the parsonage for the Methodist Church located at Wesley and Victoria Rd.

DON BOSCO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This was a junior high school when my father went there in 1968. It was located behind Whitney School. The school is located on a hill called Carlin's hill after the first settlers at the Pier. Before the steel plant this whole area was farmland.

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St George

HOLY GHOST UKRANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

In November of 1912 the members of the Ukranian community started to build the church. The Church was opened in November of 1913. This church burned in 1933 and was replaced the following year. This church is the only Ukranian Catholic Church east of Montreal.

ST. GEORGE'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

This church was located on Breton Street and is the site of a senior's social club now. The church had the name St. George's Russian Orthodox between 1916 and 1923. Between 1936 and 1952 it was known as St. George's Ukranian Church. This church started in 1916. This church closed in 1923 and the congregation went to Holy Ghost Ukranian Church. It reopened in 1936 and closed in 1952.

ST. MARY'S POLISH CHURCH

In 1913 seven members of the Polish Community met to make plans to acquire land and build a Polish Church. The Polish community dug and poured the foundation themselves. In September, 1913 the basement was blessed and served as the church until 1918. In 1918 the church was completed. This church is located on 11 Wesley Street just off Victoria Road, next to the Royal Canadian Legion. St. Mary's is the only Polish Church east of Montreal.

MUSEUM

ADATH ISRAEL CONGREGATION

The Hebrew congregation built its first synagogue or "Shul" on Mount Pleasant Street in 1913. The original synagogue burned in 1960. The new building was built on the original foundation and the basement remains as it was originally. The Young Men's Hebrew Association was next to the Synagogue. This was also destroyed by fire in the 1960's and not rebuilt. The Adath Israel Congregation closed in 1985. The building is presently the Whitney Pier Historical Society.

HEBREW CEMETERY

This is located on Lingan Road. In the newer part of the cemetery all the stones are the same. On the front of the stones names are printed in English and on the back of the stones the writing is in Hebrew.

HOME

At the top of the hill is the Whitney Pier Historiacal Society. The home to the left of it was the home of the person I interviewed, Mary MacKay Campbell Debison.

LIVERY STABLES

This field on Henry Street was the site of Mrs. Debison's father's livery stable business at the turn of the century. He had many horses. It was a place where men could go to groom and feed their horses. Three men were employed there, John Powell, Dick Holiday, and A. Gillespie.

ST. NICHOLAS ITALIAN CHURCH

The first Italian Church was built in 1911. It was located on the corner of William and Hankard Street. The Church had a sixty-five foot steeple. The church burned October 31, 1971. The pastor in 1943 was Father Emidio D'Intino who was the first baby baptized in St. Nicholas Church in 1911.

HOLY REDEEMER CONVENT

This picture was taken from the field across from the convent on Neville St. This field was the site of the original convent-school. The original building was destroyed in the fire of June 11,1913. The present convent is the third convent at Holy Redeemer.

OLD HOMES IN A "NEW" LOCATION

Before the steel plant the area along the water from the overpass to Holy Redeemer Chuirch was a green pasture land. The government took over the land and some of the houses were moved. These houses are on Laurier Street to the left of the overpass as you go into the Pier One of these homes was Fr. D'Intino's of the Italian Parish.

STEEL PLANT

The first furnace was lit on December 19,1900, fifteen months after construction began. The cost of construction was twenty million dollars.

NEW INDUSTRY

In 1900 thousands of people came from Europe, the Mediterranean, the West Indies, Asia,Newfoundland, and parts of Cape Breton. Most of the settlers came to the Pier. After they got settled many of their families arrived. They brought their culture with them. This included their language, religion, clothing, customs, and food.

The End